

International Day of Peace Observed in Denmark

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Copenhagen, Denmark -- UPF-Denmark celebrated the UN International Day of Peace on September 27, 2015. The event, hosted by Member of Parliament Yildiz Akdogan, was held in the beautiful Common Room of the Christiansborg Palace, the seat of the Danish parliament. The 150-seat room was filled with Ambassadors for Peace, community, religious and NGO leaders and UPF friends.

In her welcoming address Yildiz Akdogan introduced the theme of the UN Day of Peace 2015: "Partnerships for Peace – Dignity for All," a theme that emphasizes the importance of including all segments of society to work together for peace. She referred to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, which sets the focus on a new global sustainable development agenda and meaningful action on climate change.

UPF-Denmark Vice Chair Thorkil Christensen briefly introduced UPF and its mission and explained the relationship between UPF and the UN.

The first part of the program featured four speakers:

Stine Bosse, since 2010 a member of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group and twice recognized as one of the most influential businesswomen in the world, set a positive tone of hope, presenting the many advances in the fight against poverty and better opportunities for children's education in Africa and many other areas in the world. She emphasized the need for a united Europe to support the UN.

Jens-André Herbener, a religious historian and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southern Denmark, spoke on "Climate Change and the Responsibility of Religions for Sustainability and Peace." He started by saying that the global climate crisis is one of the biggest threats to peace, that climate change might result in hundreds of millions of climate refugees in the future if we do not take this issue seriously and put climate on the agenda worldwide. According to Mr. Herbener, religions can play a crucial role in solving the global climate crisis, because religions are major sources of values and humankind's view of nature; therefore religions have a large responsibility for sustainability and peace.

The artist Nadia Plesner spoke about art as a driving force to help victims of disasters. Ms. Plesner became known worldwide when her cartoon-like picture (see it here: www.nadiaplesner.com/simple-living--darfurnical) of a naked African child bearing a copy of Paris Hilton's bejeweled little dog and a Louis Vuitton bag went viral. After being seriously injured in a traffic accident and unable to move, with crushed dreams and full of self-pity, she became outraged by newspapers prioritizing entertainment stories above humanitarian disasters. She decided to use her art for victims of disasters and got the idea for her picture. It brought on a lawsuit against her by Louis Vuitton, one she eventually won after a long,

arduous battle during which she also slowly regained her health. In November 2012 the UN asked Ms. Plesner if they could use her Simple Living drawing on their website as an illustration on their page about artistic freedom. Today she raises funds for emergency aid in several countries through her art. Her story is a great example of what a single person can do.



Lotte Heise, a well-known speaker and radio host, spoke about how art and culture can create peace and harmony. Music is a universal language, and Ms. Heise gave ample examples of how songs and music can heal and bring people together. She encouraged the participants to be ambassadors for music, which eventually can lead to peace.

Before the peace ceremony began, the audience sang together the anti-war song "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream."

Thorkil Christensen introduced and gave a moving explanation of the deep symbolic meaning of the peace ceremony before seven religious leaders representing Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism poured water in a common bowl in a serene and solemn atmosphere.

The celebration finished with musical performances.

First to perform were the world-renowned recorder virtuoso Michala Petri and Lars Hannibal on guitar. Michala Petri has played the recorder since she was three years old and has appeared in concert halls all over the world. With their music the hall was filled with their intensity, humor and virtuosity, which touched the hearts of the audience.

They were followed by Cæcilie Norby and Lars Danielsson, a Danish jazz singer and a Swedish bassist, who are called Europe's dream couple of jazz. They performed two tracks from their new duo-album, "Just the Two of Us," a meditation on reality and fantasy, which has been praised by critics across Europe. This left no one unmoved -- it was really magical!

The speakers and artists alike were impressed with the audience and the atmosphere of the event, and many positive comments were heard from the participants.